



## THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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# Navajo First Lady Vikki Shirley assumes post on newly-formed Arizona Meth Project Advisory Board

**WINDOW ROCK, Ariz.** – Navajo Nation First Lady Vikki Shirley has been seated as co-chair of the Arizona Meth Project Advisory Board.

Mrs. Shirley attended her first meeting last Thursday in Phoenix and was welcomed by co-chairs Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard and Maricopa County Supervisor Don Stapley. She had been invited to join the advisory board by Mr. Goddard.

Mrs. Shirley's leadership will be used to help engage Arizona tribes to become involved in the project.

"I am honored to be asked by the Attorney General to co-chair, and formally accept," she said. "Meth use is on the rise in all of Arizona, but unfortunately the stats are higher on Navajo Nation. It is important to educate and get the word out.

Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., said the Navajo Nation is honored to have its First Lady appointed to this vital advisory board to address the growing epidemic of methamphetamine use on the Navajo Nation and other Native nations.

"She will have a strong voice in advocating for all Native country to develop a comprehensive approach for addressing the problem of meth abuse," he said. "A new strategy is required that includes prevention-education, interdiction and treatment. In order to effectively deal with the current drug abuse situation, our prevention-treatment programs must be integrated to collectively address all aspects of the problem."



*With Navajo Nation First Lady Vikki Shirley is, left, Jane Irvine, Director of Community Outreach and Education for the Arizona Attorney General's Office and staff to Attorney General Terry Goddard for the Arizona Meth Project, and Maricopa County Supervisor Don Stapley, Co-Chair of the Arizona Meth Project.  
Mona Seamon Photo*

The First Lady is now at work to plan the 2007 "Meth ei Dooda" Conference set for June 27 and 28, with a Tribal Leaders' Summit on June 29.

The Arizona Meth Project is modeled after the highly-successful Montana Meth Project, which was implemented in August 2005 and received national media attention for its graphic depictions of the effects of using methamphetamine.

It is backed by \$5.3 million for a mass media effort that launched in April primarily targeting junior and high-school students, young adults ages 18 to 24 and parents.

"Meth destroys everything it touches and is closely connected with many types of crimes," Mr. Goddard said. "This collaborative mass media prevention campaign targeting youth, young adults and parents is a first for Arizona. It will initiate parent-child conversations about meth and complement the efforts of anti-meth coalitions across the state already working to address this problem at the local level."

To date, the 10 participating Arizona counties in the AMP include Cochise, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, La Paz, Maricopa, Mohave, Navajo, Pinal, and Yuma, as well as funding from the Arizona Attorney General's Office and the Maricopa County General Fund.

Methamphetamine use has become epidemic on Native lands. In February 2005, the Navajo Nation Council voted 64-0 to make the use, possession, distribution and manufacture of meth illegal on the Navajo Nation.

In January 2004, the Navajo Nation Dept. of Behavioral Health began to see an increased number of agencies reporting the use of meth on the Navajo Nation. In March 2004, information about meth began to be distributed to all Navajo DBHS treatment centers.

The department employs 10 prevention specialists and two health educators. It is the lead agency designated by the Navajo Nation Council to provide comprehensive alcohol and substance abuse prevention and education, treatment and aftercare services to Navajo individuals and their families.

According to the 2003 Navajo Youth Risk Behavioral Survey, some 15 percent of Navajo high school students reported using meth.

On May 7, Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano's Task Force on Methamphetamine issued policy recommendations for a comprehensive statewide strategy to combat meth.

The task force's 10-point plan of action included:

- Creating a single point of contact to orchestrate the statewide planning and delivery of services specific to methamphetamine.
- Fund site-based prevention specialists to enhance the capacity of school districts to engage in prevention efforts.

- Promote the use of evidence-based media campaigns to reduce the production and use of meth.

- Identify and implement evidence-based prevention strategies to prevent high-risk populations from using meth.

- Expand treatment services for adult and juvenile meth-related offenders.

- Develop a framework to improve access to substance abuse treatment statewide.

- Reduce trafficking of meth and its precursor chemicals.

- Implement and support continue data collection methods to track pseudoephedrine sales and meth-related arrest information through multi-system approaches.

- Expand the reach of Drug Endangered Children Protocols to all communities and tribal governments.

- Implement an immediate response system to clandestine meth lab sites and other meth-affected properties to reduce the negative environmental impact of meth.

According to the 2006 Arizona Youth Survey, Meth use among Arizona teens is 4.3 percent, almost twice the national average.

Supervisor Stapley noted the importance of results and of localization of the campaign.

"This campaign will be carefully measured for outcomes," he said. "A survey will assess the awareness of the destructive effects of meth use before the campaign starts, then again after the second phase of advertising."

For Navajo Nation information about meth and the June conference, contact Char James at 928-729-4470.

For details on Arizona Meth Project, see [arizonamethproject.org](http://arizonamethproject.org).

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